United Nations

Press Release

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FRIDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Secretary-General to send representative to Kuwait-Iraq area to determine humanitarian role of United Nations following conflict.

- Former Prime Minister of Italy to assist Secretary-General in his efforts to help Government of Lebanon in its reconstruction.

- Security Council accepts Secretary-General's recommendation to end mandate of United Nations Observer Group monitoring cease-fire between Iraq and Iran.

- General Assembly President meets in Rome with Italian Ministers before leaving for two-day official visit to Albania.

- Food and Agriculture Organization announces $56 million in emergency food aid to five African countries.

- Special Committee against Apartheid holds hearings of legal experts on human rights situation in South Africa.

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Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar announced today that he had decided to send Under-Secretary-General Martti Ahtisaari to the Kuwait-Iraq area on a short mission on his behalf. Mr. Ahtisaari would leave as soon as possible, and report back to the Secretary-General on what action the United Nations can take to help people in need.

The announcement was made at a press conference given by the heads of the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), who reported on a joint WHO/UNICEF mission to Iraq.

Mr. Perez de Cuellar said he had met yesterday with a group of his senior colleagues to discuss different aspects of the situation in the Persian Gulf area, and, in particular, swift humanitarian emergency assistance to the people of Kuwait and Iraq.

(more)

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It was agreed at the meeting, the Secretary-General said, that the United Nations system must react with all due speed in order to provide help urgently to those in need and to prevent further human suffering.

Mr. Perez de Cuellar said there had been considerable prior planning as far as emergency assistance was concerned. Various stocks had been pre-positioned in the vicinity of areas most affected by recent events. He added that the United Nations system stood ready in the period ahead to be of all possible help to the people in need.

James Grant, Executive Director of UNICEF, told correspondents the first United Nations mission in Kuwait had occurred today. Medical supplies had been pre-positioned in hospitals in Bahrain. He hoped that some of the vast military medical supplies could be made available in Iraq and Kuwait.

In a separate development, a United Nations official said today that the President of the Security Council for the month of March, Peter Hohenfellner (Austria), had been engaged in bilateral consultations on the Gulf situation throughout the day.

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A United Nations official told correspondents today that the Secretary-General had met with his Personal Representative on Debt, former Prime Minister of Italy Bettino Craxi. They had discussed, among other things, the situation in the Mediterranean region and the Near East with particular regard to Lebanon and the United Nations responsibilities to assist that country in its reconstruction. The official said further that Mr. Craxi had accepted a request by the Secretary-General that he join him in his efforts to mobilize all possible resources to help the Lebanese Government in its rehabilitation process.

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Members of the Security Council have accepted a recommendation from the Secretary-General to end the mandate of the United Nations Observer Group monitoring the cease-fire between Iraq and Iran (UNIIMOG). The Secretary-General was informed of the Council's agreement in a letter dated 28 February, from the Council President.

Mr. Perez de Cuellar had recommended in a report that the mandate of the Group not be extended beyond 25 February. He said the withdrawal of forces of the two sides to the internationally recognized boundaries as described in the 1975 Treaty concerning the State Frontier and Neighbourly Relations between Iran and Iraq had at last been completed.

In a letter to the Council President on 26 February, the Secretary-General said he envisaged the establishment in Iran and Iraq of a group of civilian officers who would be able to give an assessment of

developments in the area. He said the continued presence of a few military observers attached to those civilian officers would allow the United Nations to respond promptly to any irregularities in the area.

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The President of the General Assembly, Guido de Marco of Malta, today left Rome for a three-day official visit to Albania.

Mr. de Marco is conducting a series of official visits in his capacity as Assembly President and also as Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Malta.

While in Rome, President de Marco met with Pope John Paul II and Italian Prime Minister Giulio Andreotti. He also had talks with the Italian Foreign Minister, Gianni de Michelis, on the international situation generally, with particular reference to the Gulf situation and to security matters in Europe and the Mediterranean. He also received Ambassador Suk Kyu Kim of the Republic of Korea who delivered a letter to him from the Korean Foreign Minister.

Before leaving Rome, the President met with Ambassador Ahmad Ghaith Abdullah of Kuwait to convey a message of congratulations and solidarity on the liberation of his country.

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The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) announced today in Rome that it will provide emergency food aid worth more than $45 million for an estimated 1.3 million persons affected by drought and civil strive in Ethiopia.

The Organization said emergency food aid totalling some $11 million will also be sent to Uganda, Chad, Guinea-Bissau and Cameroon.

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The Special Committee against Apartheid met today to hear statements from legal experts on the situation of human rights in South Africa.

The Acting Chairman of the Committee, Jai Pratap Rana (Nepal), said there still existed obstacles to negotiations for a united, non-racial democratic society in South Africa which must be removed.

He said the recent death of lawyer Bheki Mlangeni showed that there were forces in South Africa that were opposed to the ongoing process of change and were intent on using violent methods to derail it. The democratic forces in South Africa needed the international community's support more that ever. That support could be manifested by keeping the pressure on Pretoria, the Committee Chairman said.

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